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SUBJECT: Comments on the 18 June 1984 "Wall Street Journal"
Editorial on Afghanistan

1. The 18 June 1984 edition of "The Wall Street Journal" has an editorial on Afghanistan entitled "Boiling the Ocean." The main thrust of the editorial is that the Soviets are about to induce a famine in Afghanistan. The editorial cites a British research group, Afghan Aid, which released a survey in May, 1984 by Frances D'Souza of the Food Emergencies Research Unit of London University which alleges that Afghanistan is under the threat of famine.

2. Our analysts have reviewed the British researchers report and well publicized call for urgent measures "to save a half million people facing starvation" in Afghanistan. The conclusion is that there is no famine crisis at hand, and that shortages of food are no worse now than in past years. The British researchers cite food shortages only in Parvan and Badakhshan Provinces, which French doctors also have identified as problem areas. Parvan has been subjected to repeated military operations, and Badakhshan traditionally suffers from poverty and malnutrition. However, our sources report that with the exception of Farah Province, most areas of Afghanistan have adequate food.

3. The threat of food shortages may grow this fall and winter because of drought due to the low runoff from light winter snows. Should widespread shortages occur, the Soviets will probably increase food aid and try to exploit it by forcing the populace to depend on the Kabul regime for food supplies. Nevertheless, food supplies funneled through Pakistan and crops in several northern provinces should probably suffice for insurgents and their civilian supporters in most areas except western Afghanistan and the Hazarajat.

4. The editorial also notes that a 900-man unit of Afghans, including an Afghan general and a number of Soviet officers, surrendered in a side valley (of the Panjsher). We have no intelligence to confirm or deny this report, but we believe this is based on exaggerated insurgent press releases from Peshawar on their success in fighting Soviet forces in the Panjsher.

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5. Mention in the editorial that the Soviets suffered 400 to 500 serious injuries from insurgent use of mines is true except that the casualty figure is more accurately 200 injured.

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Boiling the Ocean

News from Afghanistan is both exhilarating and tragic. The Soviets have failed to crush the Afghan resistance in their largest offensive to date. But they may take their vengeance on the Afghan population with an induced famine that competent Western observers think may rank among the more spectacular disasters of the last few years.

The Soviet invaders staged a massive march this spring into the strategic Panjshir Valley stronghold of the mujahedeen, the Afghan freedom fighters, northeast of the capital city of Kabul. Military observers have marveled at the Russians' coordinated use of ground troops, helicopters, paratroops and saturation high-altitude bombing (as well as poison gas). Yet the guerrillas have bounced back. Afghan exile headquarters in Peshawar, Pakistan, claim that Soviet troops have withdrawn from the upper half of the Panjshir under increasing harassment. One Russian outpost is currently cut off. A 900-man unit of Afghans, including an Afghan general and a number of Soviet officers, surrendered in a side valley and is being brought back to Pakistan. The Soviet forces, 16,000 strong, have now concentrated in the towns of Bazared and Rukha, famous for an ice cream parlor made by Afghans out of a downed Soviet supply helicopter.

It remains to be seen whether this withdrawal is a classic anti-guerrilla tactic, designed to draw the mujahedeen out in the open, part of a Soviet plan to hold only the lower valley, or simply a retreat. But there is growing agreement that Soviet hopes of a military victory have been frustrated, and possibly at higher cost to the Russians than to the mujahedeen. Ahmad Shah Massoud, the Panjshir Valley commander who is deservedly becoming a legend, evacuated troops and civilians before the assault and left his abandoned strongholds heavily mined. Afghan sources think this tactic alone caused 400 to 500 serious injuries among elite Soviet paratroops.

In short, the Afghans appear to have kept pace with the improved Soviet military. In spite of scandalously inadequate Western aid, a network of local commanders, some of whom equal Massoud in ability if not fame, has brought the resistance to its highest level yet of coordination and organization. In turn, the Soviets appear to have decided that if they can't win a military victory, they will have a demographic one by eliminating the population that gives the resistance its base.

Warnings of this strategy came last year from Claude Malhuret, executive director of the Paris-based *Médecins sans Frontières* (Doctors without Borders), a volunteer group that maintains six hospitals in mujahedeen-controlled parts of Afghanistan. If guerrillas move among the population, in Mao's words "like fish in the water," then the Soviet response is to boil the ocean. Anti-guerrilla wars

aren't decided by the Western strategy of winning over the population, Dr. Malhuret concludes glumly, but by "making terror reign." Over the years his group has seen this Soviet approach firsthand several times. In the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, the populations of villages and towns were driven into Somalia. In Cambodia after the Vietnamese invasion, grain was bottled up in Kompong Som until the population that might support the resistance had starved or fled. Now it's Afghanistan's turn.

More than four million Afghans, maybe half the population under mujahedeen control, have fled to Pakistan and Iran, helped along by indiscriminate Soviet bombing, massacring and sowing of mines. (These mines are designed to maim rather than kill, French doctors from several groups report, and some have been disguised as toys.) A million more Afghans may have been driven to cities under Soviet control. The Soviet invaders are working hard to centralize the food-distribution system, and they are now trying to destroy crops they can't buy up. Afghans report Russian bombing of the irrigation system in the rich Shomali plain and napalming of storage bins to destroy the wheat harvest.

The parallel often cited is Stalin's man-made famine in the Ukraine in 1932-33, when communist confiscation of the harvest caused at least five million to seven million deaths and wiped out the entire nationalist strata of that society. So far, Afghans have escaped the worst, but danger signs are already up. The British group Afghan Aid recently released a nutritional and economic survey by Frances D'Souza of the Food Emergencies Research Unit of London University. To its shock, field examinations in remote Badakshan revealed severe malnutrition among more than 20% of the children, worse results than in Biafra. Not by accident, Badakshan sits on important Soviet supply lines; mujahedeen attacks have been intense, and earlier reports say the Russians have tried to terrorize and drive out its inhabitants by dropping "yellow rain."

The mujahedeen are deeply aware that their most important battle now may be to feed their population. Some commanders have delegated units to help with the harvest and repair the irrigation system. Emissaries to the West now plead for food aid as urgently as they ask for antiaircraft missiles. They deserve both. But if the West lacks the nerve to send them SAMs (or Stingers), it has no excuse to stint in shipping humanitarian aid. The Soviet famine strategy can be frustrated if sufficient grain supplies are made available in Pakistan to the mujahedeen distribution network. Perhaps even more so than the fight in the Panjshir Valley, the economic battle will be critically important. Will the West sit this one out too?

There is a widely shared feeling that something is wrong with the way we are building and operating nuclear plants. U.S. nuclear-power technology has become the standard for the world, but it seems to be faring better abroad than in the U.S.

The standard industry view has been that the problem lies with excessive and changing safety regulation. Lately, criticism has been leveled at electric-utility management that failed to maintain control over nuclear construction projects or operating plants. A look at the complex details of problem plants only confirms that each found a unique path to trouble. What is the source of the difficulties? And what can we do about it?

No Market Incentives

No fact goes further to explain the problems of nuclear power in the U.S., or is more important to confront, than that we have nearly 60 utilities in charge of nuclear-power-plant projects. France has a single utility, and while Japan has eight nuclear utilities, two large ones set the pattern for the others.

In the U.S., several dozen utilities, including rather small ones, started to build nuclear plants more or less simultaneously, each following its own "learning curve." As most built only one or two reactors, few economies of scale were realized. And the normal market incentives to best the others in an industry were absent because, of course, these many utilities do not compete. In the late 1970s, the environment for nuclear power became more complex and demanding—in technical, financial and political terms. The penalties for inexperience became greater. It is significant that almost every one of the troubled projects that have been in the news lately—Diablo Canyon, Grand Gulf, Marble Hill, Midland, Seabrook, Shoreham, South Texas, Washington Public Power Supply System, Zimmer—is the first commercial nuclear project for the utility in charge.

Construction problems are also a factor. It is sometimes overlooked that in the U.S. the reactor manufacturer (say, General Electric or Westinghouse) usually supplies just the nuclear fire box, so to speak, less than 20% of the plant. The rest is typically designed by one of a dozen engineering firms, which may also be in charge of construction on a cost-plus basis. The many

The Sup

By BERNARD H. SIEGAN

The government's discretionary authority to issue paper money is often associated with Congress's creation of the Federal Reserve System in 1913. While this legislation did provide such authority, it is more accurate to attribute this power to the Supreme Court's interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

It was 100 years ago this year that the court ruled in *Juliard vs. Greenman* that Congress had the constitutional power in both peace and war to make government-issued paper—the famous greenbacks of that time—a legal tender in payment of all private debts. The decision is noteworthy not only because of the anniversary of an important judicial event, but also as a lesson to persons seeking to amend the Constitution.

The evidence is most convincing that the delegates to the convention of 1787 intended, based on gold and silver, to create a medium of exchange and was draftsmanship purpose carefully to prevent the application of an entire nation.

The framers of the paper money had been emitted by the Continental Congress at the Revolution.